

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY SANA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3931

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINS, YE

SUBJECT: TRIBAL FIGHTING IN THE NORTH OF YEMEN

BEGIN SUMMARY: TRIBAL WARFARE RESUMED IN NORTHERN PART
OF YEMEN LAST WEEK, WITH REPORTS OF 100 CASUALTIES.
LECING TRIBAL SHAYKH MOUJAHID ABU SHUWARIB BADLY WOUNDED.
NO INVOLVEMENT OF GOVERNMENT FORCES TO THIS POINT.
END SUMMARY.

1. DURING THE PAST WEEK REPORTS OF FIGHTING BETWEEN
ELEMENTS OF THE TWO MAIN TRIBAL CONFEDERATIONS IN YEMEN,
THE HASID AND THE BAKIL, HAVE BEEN CIRCULATING IN SANA.
TROUBLE APPARENTLY BEGAN WHEN MEMBERS OF THE SUFYAN
TRIBE (BAKIL) SEIZED A VEHICLE OF ONE OF THE HASID TRIBES,
AND KILLED EITHER THE DRIVER OR ANOTHER HASHID TRIBESMAN.
ONE SOURCE SAYS CARS CONTAINED SAUDI SUBSIDIES FOR TRIBES
BUT WE HAVE NOT CONFIRMED THIS. WHEN ANOTHER
HASHID REPRESENTATIVE WAS SENT TO INVESTIGATE AND
ATTEMPTED TO MEDIATE (ONE REPORT HAS IT THAT THE GHASHMI
REGIME SENT THE MEDIATOR, BUT GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS
HERE INSIST YARG NO INVOLVED) HE, TOO, WAS KILLED BY
THE SUFYAN, PRECIPITATING THE INFLUX OF ARMED HASHID
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TRIBESMEN TO THE AREA, WITH OTHER BAKIL TRIBES COMING
TO SUPPORT THEIR SUFYAN ALLIES. FIGHTING REPORTEDLY
CENTERED IN AREA SOUTH OF TWON OF HUTH WHICH IS
LOCATED ABOUT 100 KM NORTH OF SANA ON MAIN ROAD
THROUGH NORTHERN PART OF YAR. MORTARS AND MACHINE GUNS
REPORTEDLY IN USE AND TWO SUFYAN VILLAGES SAID TO BE
BADLY SHOT UP. AS OF FEB 24, NUMBER OF CASUALTIES

FREQUENTLY MENTIONED IS 20 DEAD AND THREE OR FOUR TIMES THAT NUMBER WOUNDED. IN ANY CASE WOUNDED REPORTEDLY INCLUDE MOUJAHID ABU SHUWARIB, BROTHER-IN-LAW OF HASHID PARAMOUNT SHAYKH ABDALLAH BIN HUSAYN AL-AHMAR. MOUJAHID'S BROTHER MAY ALSO BE DEAD, SUGGESTING HE MAY HAVE BEEN EMISSARY. IT WOULD TAKE ATTACK ON TWO MEN LIKE THIS TO PRODUCE GALVANIC HASHID REACTION. LLWM EMBOFFS TRAVELING NORTH ON FEB 23 PASSED LAST GOVERNMENT CHECKPOINT NEAR TOWN OF AMRAN, 30KM NORTH OF CAPITAL. FROM THAT POINT ON, ARMED TRIBESMEN STOPPED AND CHECKED ALL VEHICLES CLOSELY AT LEAST 10 TIMES DURING NEXT 15-20KM, PARTICULARLY IN TOWN OF RAYDAH. AT ONE POINT, EMBOFFS WERE ASKED IF THEY WERE THE "DOCTORS" WHO WERE EVIDENTLY EXPECTED. EMBASSY PARTY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PERMITTED TO TRAVEL FARTHER NORTH BUT WAS ALLOWED TO TURN EAST INTO RELATIVELY UNPOPULATED AREA. OTHER WESTERN TRAVELERS FROM SANA HAVE REPORTED SIMILAR DENIAL OF TRAVEL BEYOND RAYDAH IN PAST WEEK.

3. YAR OFFICIALS ARE NOT DISCUSSING THE INCIDENTS AND MEDIA MAKING NO MENTION OF THEM. BUT DEVOTED VIEWERS OF YEMEN TELEVISION SAY THERE HAS BEEN DISCERNIBLE INCREASE IN AMOUNT OF FILM SHOWING ALL THREE MEMBERS OF COMMAND COUNCIL TALKING AND ACTING TOGETHER (AT EXPENSE OF GHASHMI WORKING IN SOLITARY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SPLENDOR).

COMMENT: ABSENCE OF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENTUJ SIGN OF BOTH DISCRETION AND WEAKNESS. NORTH OF YEMEN HAS NEVER BEEN UNDER GOVERNMENT SWAY, AND GHASHMI DESPITE STRONG TRIBAL TIES, HAS NOT CHANGED THIS. GHASHMI, MOREOVER, WON'T REGRET TRIBAL WAREFARE, PARTICULARLY IF RIVAL MOUJAHID HAS BEEN WOUNDED AND FIGHTING RESULTED FROM THE DISPUTE OVER SAUDI MONEY. GHASHMI IS CALM. THERE IS NO SIGN OF ANY TROOP MOBILIZATION OR MANEUVERS. WHEN AMBASSADOR AND ROCKEFELLER PARTY VISITED PRESIDENT IN HIS VILLAGE HOME OUTSIDE SANA FEB 24,73#3 2- 43)-/3\$, COMPOSED, AND CLEARLY ABLE TO FOCUS ON MATTERS OTHER THAN TRIBAL FRACAS. SCOTES

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LAST WEEK, WITH REPORTS OF 100 CASUALTIES
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